

# C.O.R.E.

Version 1.0

Basic Rules

*The Chupa Open Roleplaying Engine*

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## Introduction:

# Cinematic Roleplaying

*Welcome to C.O.R.E., the Chupa Open Roleplaying Engine. Developed by the listeners of the Dragon's Landing Podcast, C.O.R.E. is the perfect introduction for new roleplayers, and is designed for speed and story.*

### Credits:

#### Lead Designer:

» Lonnie Ezell

#### Designers:

» Elrandir  
» Meus  
» Neil  
» Stickman  
» Working Man  
» Dragavan  
» Harping Mick  
» Crossfire  
» Havoc  
» TargetBoy  
» Candestine

#### Editors:

» Hyphen  
» Lord Z

#### Layout:

» Lonnie Ezell

### Sponsor:

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*C.O.R.E.* focuses on drama and speed of play. Your character's skills and abilities, and your vivid imagination, rather than his equipment, determine his capabilities. Instead of focusing on providing rules to cover every aspect of a character's life, these rules are meant as guidelines, and are an aid to multi-player story construction. Instead of the Director being left to referee every detail, the players are encouraged to take an active part in the story and, hopefully, enjoy a richer story because of it.

Before you get started with the rules, this introduction gives you an overview of what to expect from this system.

## What is this book?

*C.O.R.E.* is a set of rules intended to be used as the foundation for other settings and systems to be built on. While games can be easily played without any modifications, the system is only a basic guide, and lacks rules for many things, like magic, that would be specific to a certain setting or genre. Additional modules can be easily plugged into the core system. You will find all of the information you need to create a character, fight foes, and play through exciting adventures.

The rules found in this book are very basic, and are perfect for one-shot games,

new roleplayers, and convention games. Groups that prefer extremely simple and stream-lined systems that do not get in the way will also find this system a good match. Expanded rules can be found at the same place you found these rules. They provide more detailed rules, but without sacrificing the speed and simplicity of the system.

Here's what you will find in each Act of the *C.O.R.E.* rules:

**Act 0: Quick Start Narrative.** The Quick Start gives you an example of how the rules would work during actual play. Brief overviews are given for new rules as they come into play, and are described right alongside the story.

**Act 1: Character Creation & Growth.** Act 1 shows you the seven simple steps needed to create a complete character that is ready for play. You also learn how characters grow throughout their lives.

**Act 2: Backstory.** Characters are the cornerstone of any roleplaying game. And it is their background that makes a character into something worth telling a story about. What makes them unique? What past history led them to be who they are today?

**Act 3: Attributes.** The cornerstone of any character is their ability to act quick, bash down doors, or think on their feet. Attributes represent the strength of body,

mind, social ability, and spirit.

**Act 4: Skills.** Not everything comes naturally. PCs can train in many directions, picking up new abilities in many areas. This separates the street thugs from the martial artists, the smart-aleck from the linguist, and the dancer from the Olympian.

**Act 5: Secrets.** Every character is blessed with special powers or tricks that also separate them from the mass of common men and women. Secrets can give characters knacks, or unlock their psychic powers, and more.

**Act 6: Equipment & Wealth.** While attributes and skills are more important in this system than equipment, there are still times when the story requires an artifact, or other treasures, to hand out.

**Act 7: Conflicts.** Drama is conflict. Conflict is not just about bashing someone over the head with a heavy sword. Arguments, magical challenges, cutting the right wire in a ticking bomb, and prying a grate loose from the wall are all conflicts. They are all treated the same, and can be handled with as much—or little—detail as is necessary to tell the story you want to tell.

**Act 8: Director's Notes.** Preparing for a game of C.O.R.E. is—in many ways—easier than most other systems. But it requires a different way of thinking than you might be used to. The Director's Notes include advice on customizing the game to fit your world, and running a game.

## Getting Started

If you have never played in a *C.O.R.E.* game before, we recommend reading

through the Quick Start Narrative to get a feel for how the game works. Then you should browse through Acts 2-5 to get an idea of the possibilities available to you. When you are ready to create a character, come back to Act 1: Character Creation & Growth.

Even though there are not a lot of rules, experienced roleplayers may have a hard time getting accustomed to the types of rules within this system. It is not that they are difficult, but these rules are vastly different from what the seasoned roleplayer might know, so they will take some time to get used to. So, don't worry about learning all of the rules right away. Once you have created a couple of characters and maybe even run through some mock conflicts, you should have a pretty good grasp on how things work.

## The Basics

Whether you are new to roleplaying, or a veteran of another system, you should keep the following concepts in mind while reading through the *C.O.R.E.* rule system.

## Dice Notation

All rolls will be made using one or more ten-sided dice. When more than one die is used, only the highest value is kept. To notate a roll of the dice the following convention is used:

**[#] d10 [+/- modifiers]**

*Example:* 2d10 + 4 means “Roll 2 ten-sided dice. Keep the single highest value. Then add 4.”

## Basic Task Resolution System

All rolls use the same system to determine success or failure. That system is as follows:

**d10 roll + relevant attribute +  
relevant skill + any modifiers  
vs. a target number**

The modifiers and the target number are determined by the type of task. If the roll plus all modifiers is equal to, or higher than, the target number then the roll is a success. Otherwise, it is a failure.

If the highest roll on the dice is a 10, it is not an automatic success. If the highest roll on the dice was a 1, it is not an automatic failure. However, it does indicate that a story-based difficulty happens as a direct result.

## A Few Terms You Need to Know

Since *C.O.R.E.* is designed with a cinematic feel in mind, several terms were ripped straight from the movie set and put to use here. Knowing these terms will make sure you don't get lost while reading the rules.

**Actors.** These are the characters the players play during the game. The players get to create their backgrounds and personalities and steer them through the mayhem that is sure to follow.

**Director.** This is the person that runs the game. She describes the world to the Actors, plays all of the Extras (see below,) and make sure things run smoothly. When disagreements happen while playing the game, she is the one responsible for settling them. In other words, her word is law. Be nice to her.

**Extras.** These are all of the characters in the game that are not played by the players. These are usually played by the Director, though occasionally they might be played by other players who are there only for one game session and are helping the Director out.

## Act 0:

# Quick Start Narrative

*The easiest way to learn a new game is to see it played. The Quick Start Narrative is intended to give you a feel for the way that the game is played. Along the way, you will learn new concepts that should get you ready to dive right into the rules.*

## PREMISE

The characters are part of Blacksmith and Weiss, a security firm. Their assignment is to track down the kidnapped daughter of a prominent businessman, Hugh Veasley. His daughter, Katie, had disappeared from a night-club called Infernum in downtown. Following up on a lead, the characters are trailing a suspect in cars when another vehicle pulls alongside and bullets start flying!

## SCENE 1 – Interstate Firefight

The heroes are split between two vehicles: a car and a motorcycle. Because of his history of dirt-bike racing, Mark's character is driving the motorcycle. Rachel's character is stuck behind the wheel of the van. The suspect is Joey Bandra, a small-time hood in a small time compact. The trouble is being caused by an unmarked white van containing four goons. One of the goons is armed with a pistol, one is driving, and the other two have baseball bats.

This is what we call an **Encounter Block**. It condenses the most important stats so you can easily find the numbers you need.

The **Director** is the player who is running the game. They play all of the characters that are not played by the players, and lead the story along.

### **Chase! Duration 3, Severity 1, Difficulty 12 (Traffic Maneuvers 16)**

Now comes the players' turn, describing how their characters are going to either stop the goons from shooting their ride up, or how they will stop Joey from escaping. Let them discuss things if they like, then they can either take individual actions or else work together on one conflict. The order isn't important, so if a player wants to go first that's fine, or else determine an order (say left from the Director).

#### **Mark**

"Who are these guys? I bet they're just hired thugs. Well, I'll put a stop to this. Rachel—you take the van; I'll take care of Joey. I pull the motorcycle alongside him and point my gun in Joey's face. That should make him pull over!"

The Director checks the encounter difficulty and decides this is in the 'Traffic Maneuvers' difficulty, so assigns a base Difficulty of 16. He then thinks over how difficult

**Conflict** is a process of rapid negotiation between the player and the Director. Both sides must agree to both the success and failure terms. Of course, the Director always has the last say.

**Damage** taken during conflicts is subtracted from the current value of the attribute used. The attribute scores will vary throughout the game, and only the current value is added to your rolls.

this is likely to be and decides it is a regular activity, so leaves the Difficulty as it is. He picks an Attribute and Skill—in this case Mark is trying to intimidate Joey—so he picks Physical and Everyman. The last thing he does is put this into conflict terms for the player to agree to.

**Director**

“You’re trying to weave through the traffic to catch up with Joey, and then to intimidate him. This is a fairly tough task of Difficulty 16. On a success, Joey is cowed and will try to pull over somewhere quiet. On a failure another vehicle will clip you as you try to pull alongside.”

**Mark**

“That sounds fine. If the bike gets clipped, it will make for some interesting acrobatics.”

John’s character is in the car and he wants to try something more daring. He decides to jump from the car into the van, taking the fight to the goons. This is not really a traffic roll, so it begins at a base Difficulty of 12. The Director agrees this would be cool, but it’s also a tough thing to do. He increases the Difficulty by 3, but also lowers it by 1 for being cool and cinematic, ending with a total Difficulty of 14. The Attribute and Skill of this conflict is Physical + Fitness. The Director specifies it as follows.

**Director**

“As the goons pull alongside, you throw yourselves across into their van. On a success you have crossed the gap and are ready to fight. On a failure you’re clinging onto the side of the goon’s van and take 1 Physical damage from the strain.”

**John**

“Since Rachel is driving, she’s part of my success here, too. Right? Can we work together on this one so that I don’t end up flapping in the breeze here?”

**Director**

“That sounds fair. Rachel, we’ll use your Physical + Technology for the driving, and John, add your Fitness to the roll for the jump. John, any damage taken is yours alone, okay?”

**John and Rachel**

“Sounds good.”

Some sample conflicts that you might encounter during the chase:

- Swerving toward the goons to put them off their shots: Mental + Technology.
- Shooting at the goons: Physical + Combat.
- Jumping between vehicles: Physical + Fitness.
- Planning a great route between vehicles to trap another vehicle: Mental + Negotiation.

## SCENE 2 – THE OLD HIDEOUT

Following up on Joey's info, the team ends up at a decrepit factory out on the old industrial park.

### **Breaking and Entering: Duration 2, Severity 0/1, Difficulty 11 (Canines 13)**

There are a fair number of regular security guards around, patrolling with guard dogs. The group will need to bypass them, maybe sneaking past, fast-talking them, or just fighting their way through. Note the severity here is listed as 0/1. This indicates that, should the characters manage to slip past the guards without being spotted, but do not end up in a fight, no damage is done to anyone. Instead, story-based difficulties will follow. If the characters do end up in a fight, the base damage done is 1 point.

**John**

"We'll wait until there's a gap in the guards. We don't want to be seen. When it's safe, we bolt from behind the crates to the door, unlock it and slip inside. We'll lock it behind us, just in case the dogs catch a whiff of us."

**Director**

"The door is locked with a card-based electronic lock. You know what that means."

**Rachel**

"Don't worry, I've got my card scrambler. That should even things out."

Since they are attempting a fairly routine breaking and entering, the Director decides that the standard difficulty of 11 applies.

**Director**

"Great. Rachel, since you're the one with the lock pick, you roll for the group. This is a Mental + Technology, thanks to your card scrambler. On a success, the entire group manages to slip into the building and lock the door behind you without being seen. A failure means that the dogs hear you guys scrambling towards the building, start barking, and the guards are around the corner while you're still working on the lock. Sound good?"

Everyone agrees, and the roll is a success.

Notice that the Duration for this encounter was set to at 2, but the players managed to get through in one try. In cases like this, you should provide another conflict based upon the story. Perhaps they enter the building and Mark's character's phone starts ringing. This conflict would not have an immediate impact, but that's okay. The

Master quality equipment, like the electronic lock, increases the difficulty by +2. However, Rachel's card scrambler is also considered master quality equipment, giving a +2 bonus to her roll, effectively getting rid of any changes in difficulty.



guards would be notified of their presence and would be bursting in through the back doors.

### **A Blast of Fresh Fire: Duration 1, Severity 3, Difficulty 21**

The last encounter of this scene shows the team busting into a now-empty warehouse. There are clues around, but they're hard to spot. There is a discarded match book from club Infernum, some hair from a blonde (Katie Veasley), a bunch of fingerprints, and some spent shell casings. One crate hangs on ropes tied to a pulley system in the rafters. An aluminum suitcase sits in the corner.

The characters start noting clues and bagging evidence. John's character swings the suitcase up on a crate and decides to open it, revealing a bomb that comes to light and starts counting down with only seconds to go. Just then, the front door is bashed open by three guards.

John's character yells to his teammates to run for the back door, but knows that he doesn't have enough time to get there before the bomb goes off. A quick scan of the room reveals windows in the upper portion of the warehouse walls—too high for him to reach. The soldiers are closing quick, but he has a plan, and it all relies on his cat-like reflexes.

#### **John**

"I pull out my pistol, run and jump to the rope that is holding the crate in the air. As I'm jumping, I shoot the rope, breaking it in half, and hold on. As I get close to the windows, I'll let go, and fly through, hopefully landing on something soft, or managing to cling on to the window ledge. If I fail, though, I fly through the window and land hard on the ground. Hopefully, the rest of the team can pull me out of there. I suggest a Physical + Fitness."

#### **Director**

"Okay, sounds fun. But let's change things up. If you are successful, you make it through the window, miraculously unhurt, and land in a large garbage-bin—the trash bags breaking your fall. If you fail, you slam into the wall and fall to the floor unconscious. You won't be hurt too much by the blast—3 points of Physical—but you will be caught. I like what you're doing with the rope, though, so we'll lower the difficulty by 3 points, bringing your difficulty down to 18."

#### **John (smiling)**

"Great! Even if I fail, I'll get into the bad guy's lair and hopefully find out more information. But I'd rather not fail, so I'm giving it all I got!"

John rolls well, adds his 4 points of Physical to the roll, and gets exactly what he needed—an 18. He flies into the air, narrowly escaping the grasping hands of the guards, and is thrown through the window by the force of the blast. He crashes into a large pile of garbage and jumps out, bruised but not broken.

The Barstool and the Chandelier rewards players for using the environment in an entertaining and creative way. The difficulty can be lowered by up to 3 points, so have fun!

Giving It All You Got allows you to add points to your roll, up to the number of points you currently have in the attribute being used. Even a success costs you, though, so use it wisely.

## Act 1:

# Character Creation & Growth

*Creating a character is quick, easy, and fun. You do not need to set aside two hours just to get ready to play. Instead, take between 15 and 30 minutes and have a fully realized character. That way, you can get right to what you like best—playing the game.*

Characters in *C.O.R.E.* are designed from the beginning to be able to contribute to the story and to the drama. They are built quickly by choosing from a number of available background options, and then given some flexibility to tweak the numbers, so that no two characters will ever be alike.

Here are the seven simple steps needed to create a character:

**1. Choose a concept.** The first thing you need is an idea. Write it down. Pass it by your Director and make any changes to fit better into the world. For the best roleplaying possibilities, leave big holes—or hooks—in your character background so that the Director can easily build your character's past into the campaign. This makes everyone's job easier: you'll have more fun, because you're a real part of the story; and the Director doesn't have to spend hours trying to figure out how to work you into the game. Don't think in terms of game mechanics, but try to create a realistic person with goals, likes, and dislikes.

**2. Record your free abilities.** Your character should be heroic, and able to do things the everyday person could not. Even if you have designed your character to be an ordinary man stuck into extraordinary circumstances, you should have the ability to pull this off. So, put one

point in each of your attributes before you even begin character creation. That way, even things that you're not very skilled at will have a slight chance to succeed.

**3. Choose your Backstories.** Now that you have your background ready, look through each category of the Backstories (Childhood, Education, Passion, and Career,) and pick one from each group. Each Backstory will have attributes and skill bonuses (or penalties) to assign to your character. Write those down on your character sheet. Each group builds on the others, forming a nearly complete character in just this one simple step.

Sometimes, you can't come up with an idea that interests you. That's all right. You can craft a great character by choosing Backstories first, and then building your character concept from there. One of the best ways to create an interesting character is to choose Backstories that do not immediately seem to fit together, and then find ways to connect them while writing up your character concept. This technique also works great when your Director has told you that everyone needs to be a certain type of character—like members of an elite squad of soldiers.

**4. Customize your skills.** Because even identical twins have different personalities, you need to add a little more

The default C.O.R.E. rules assume that all characters are human. If your Director is allowing other races, ask for modified starting values.

customization to your character. You get 4 points to spend in skills however you want.

**5. Choose your Secret.** Every character has little skills or fantastic abilities that they can do. It is just another part of what makes your character ready to face the challenges that lie in store for them. Choose one Secret from the lists of Secrets later in the book. Don't worry—you can get more later.

**6. Spend a few Advances.** Each character starts with 5 Advances to spend on things like an additional Secret, extra skills, or even another point in an attribute. See the table later in this Act for the costs.

Note: Check with your Director about the exact number of Advances you get to start with. In some worlds or systems, a higher power level will be desired. In this case the system, setting, or Director is encouraged to assign 15, or even 20 points to attributes.

**7. Flesh out the character.** One last step: simply give your character a name, write down some notes about their appearance, and any other details you need to really be able to get into your character, and you are ready to play!

## Character Growth

During the life of the game, the characters will change and grow. This is an exciting part of playing the game. The Director has a number of methods at his disposal to help the characters, but the one you need to know about is Growth Points.

Character Growth Points (CGP) represent knowledge, insight, or other experience that improves the character. CGP are awarded at the end of each Episode, unless the Director chooses to award them more or less frequently.

Directors are also encouraged to award 1-5 CGP for excellent roleplaying—especially when the roleplaying situation might hurt the character—or for fantastic ideas and solutions during the game. These bonuses are generally handed out as they occur, since this encourages more roleplaying from everyone involved.

## Purchasing Attributes

If you would rather not use the Backstories provided, you can craft your character from scratch, spending points however you see fit. Check with your Director before using these rules. They might prefer that all characters are built using Backstories.

The first step is to assign your attributes based upon your race, as described earlier.

Once that is done, you have 10 points to spend through your attributes however you want. If the system is using only the three core attributes, the player receives 8 points.

## Optional Method:

**4 Attributes.** For quicker character creation, the player may put 3 points in the primary attribute, 2 in their secondary attribute, 1 in the tertiary attribute and 0 in the remaining attribute. If the character is a normal human, place 1 point in each attribute.

**3 Attributes.** For quicker character creation, the player may put 3 points in the primary attribute, 2 in their secondary attribute, 1 in the remaining attribute. If the character is a normal human, place 1 point in each attribute.

Each **Advance** is simply one point. So why the fancy term? It allows Directors to customize the speed of advancement throughout the game.

## Spending Growth Points

During the game, each player character will get CGP for meeting the player's goals for that character's story and the Director's goals for the overall story. These experience points are converted to advances, usually at a rate of five CGP to one advance. Each advance that you get can be banked toward improving your character's Attributes, Skills, and Secrets.

You can never increase the same Skill or Attribute twice in a row. You need to

**Table A1: Advancement Costs**

	Advances
Increase a skill 1 point	2
Increase an attribute 1 point	5
Add a Secret	varies

increase something else in between. In addition, you cannot buy two Secrets in a row.

## The Training Montage

To spend Advancements, the player must narrate a Training Montage. This is a short description of the event that is the inspiration for what they are spending their Advancements on. This might be a flashback to a pivotal event that made them start learning this skill. It might be something that happened "off-screen" that helped them develop their current skill or gave them their Secret. The player should have fun and be creative.

## Act 2:

# Backstory

*What is it that turned your favorite character into who they are today? What events triggered the insanity that bred your favorite villain? It is all covered in their history, their Backstory.*

Backstory is the sum of events that happened to the characters before the game started. Many times, players will write a general history of the characters, complete with the most important events that made that characters who they are today. Often, this is fine, and the player can spend points through their character to make the numbers match the backstory. Some times, though, we are playing after

a long day of work and are tired enough that our muse is not working as well as we might wish.

Perhaps you want to get a game running on short notice. In cases like these, we provide archetypes you can use to build your character very quickly.

These Backstories are divided into four Life Stages. They are: Childhood, Education, Passion, and Career.

## Backstory Descriptions

### The Backstories:

#### Childhoods

- » Academic Prodigy
- » Child Laborer
- » Created
- » Mercantile
- » Military Brat
- » Monastic
- » Mystical
- » Natural
- » Orphanage
- » Royal
- » Schooled
- » Street Urchin

#### Educations

- » Academic
- » Criminal
- » Laborer
- » Military
- » Mystic
- » Socialite

#### Passions

- » Collector
- » Dilettante
- » Knowledge
- » Occult
- » Rebel
- » Service
- » Sports
- » Survivalist

#### Careers

- » Academic
- » Con Artist
- » Diplomat
- » Entertainer
- » Investigator
- » Laborer
- » Muscle
- » Mystic Warrior
- » Occultist
- » Soldier
- » Tactician
- » Thief

### CHILDHOOD

**Academic Prodigy.** Either through nature or other means, the character is born with an incredible talent for certain skills. This is combined with a prodigious intellect.

*Mental +1, Physical -1, Negotiation +1*

**Child Laborer.** The character is put to work in some fashion, either because their family requires every penny, or possibly to generate income for the lazy guardians. Either way, life is hard, but the character learns to take their knocks early, along with an understanding of appropriate machinery (looms, presses, forges, etc.)

*Physical +1, Technology +1*

**Created.** The character was brought to life in some manner outside of the normal mechanisms. This includes vat-grown clone warriors or beings summoned from another dimension.

*Physical +1, Fitness +1*

**Mercantile.** The character's parents were traveling merchants, either from a merchant guild or peddlers. Regardless, the character spent a lot of their childhood traveling and learning to communicate with others.

*Social +1, Negotiation +1*

**Military Brat.** The character grew up attached to a military unit. They became accustomed to the discipline of a military life and learned the basics of warfare.

*Physical +1, Combat +1*

**Monastic.** The character was raised in a cloistered manner, possibly in a religious environment.

*Spiritual +1, Everyman +1*

**Mystical.** The character is born into a mystical blood line. Perhaps the blood of dragons flows in their veins, or their ancestors consorted with daemons. For whatever reason, the forces of magic flow easily with them.

*Spiritual +1, Supernatural +1*

**Natural.** The character is brought up in harmony with nature, possibly with a tribal or aboriginal group. Their parents might be outdoors people, or they might live in a rural environment.

*Social +1, Nature +1*

**Orphanage.** The character was raised in an orphanage, which might have been a run-down state home or a private home. Money is scarce, but the character is taught the basics of learning. These children learn to work with others to achieve their goals.

*Social +1, Everyman +1*

**Royal.** The character's parents or direct bloodline are royalty. This puts the character in a favorable position socially, but may bring responsibilities later in life.

*Social +1, Negotiation +1*

**Schooled.** The character's parents are regular folks. Their childhood consists of climbing trees, getting into a little trouble, and generally being average.

*Mental +1, Everyman +1*

**Street Urchin.** Growing up in the streets, the character had no permanent guardian or family. They became tough and wily enough to survive rough nights, often relying on contacts.

*Physical +1, Skullduggery +1*



## EDUCATION

**Academic.** The character enters full-time academia. This could be as a willing student or cloistered against their will. They may serve as a librarian, scribe, or in the service of more mysterious masters.

*Mental +1, Negotiation +1*

**Criminal.** The character receives their early training from criminals, likely as part of a gang or other organized group, or working on their own. They may be a thug, con-artist, burglar, or belong to some other nefarious profession.

*Physical +1, Skullduggery +1*

**Laborer.** The character works diligently through their apprenticeship. They could work in construction, in a factory, or in agriculture.

*Physical +1, Everyman +1*

**Military.** The character learns with a group of warriors or as part of an army. They may work as a squire, help with the horses, or be involved in drilling or weapons work.

*Physical +1, Combat +1*

**Mystic.** The character's education was provided by an organization or individual that has strong connections with the supernatural. This could be a coven of witches, a strange alien benefactor, or a cult of zealots.

*Spiritual +1, Supernatural +1*

**Socialite.** The character spends all of their time partying and otherwise enjoying themselves. Such characters may well go on to be productive members of society but might also stay this way.

*Social +1, Everyman +1*

## PASSIONS

**Collector.** Be it a pack rat, a stamp collector, or a vintage car enthusiast, this character will have a passion for one or two types of items and strives to find them.

*Mental +1, Everyman +1*

**Dilettante.** The character is a social creature, finding recreation in the company of others, be it in a quiet dinner party or a raucous evening in a crowded tavern.

*Social +1, Everyman +1*

**Knowledge.** The character thirsts for knowledge, spending their free time reading or studying.

*Mental +1, Negotiation +1*

**Occult.** The character desires knowledge of things beyond mortal ken, finding dark lore and searching the shadows.

*Spiritual +1, Supernatural +1*

**Rebel.** This person seeks to do everything different than their parents, their friends, their family, their supervisors, or their peers. Trailblazing or revolting...

*Social +1, Everyman +1*

**Service.** Be it service to country or service to an organization, or even to themselves, a person with this passion will devote their energies to activities to fulfill a purpose higher than themselves.

*Social +1, Everman +1*

**Sports.** The character enjoys one, or several, sporting activities and is proficient in their chosen sports.

*Physical +1, Fitness +1*

**Survivalist.** The character enjoys outdoor pursuits, or possibly is a student of combat in one form or another. Armchair generals, hunters, martial arts enthusiasts, and others fit into the category.

*Physical +1, Combat +1*

## CAREERS

**Academic.** The character specializes in knowledge of some sort. One could be a professor, scientist, or sage.

*Mental +3, General +1, Negotiation +1*

**Con Artist.** Quick banter and swaying others to their cause are the hallmarks of this class. The confidence artist could be a demagogue, a trickster, bard, or even salesman.

*Social +2, Mental +1,  
Skullduggery +1, Negotiation +1*

**Diplomat.** A character that specializes in dealing with others, often of different cultures or races. A diplomat's job could be an interpreter, or anthropologist.

*Mental +2, Social +1,  
Negotiation +1, Everyman +1*

**Entertainer.** A character earns their living entertaining others. This category includes singers, dancers, professional gamblers, bards and the like.

*Mental +1, Social +2,  
Everyman +1, Fitness +1*

**Investigator.** The investigator joins academic promise with a nose for trouble. This could represent a government agent, a private detective, journalist, or a whip-wielding archeologist.

*Physical +1, Mental +1, Social +1,  
Everyman +1, Negotiation +1*

**Laborer.** A laborer makes a living through hard manual labor, street gangs, factory workers, chain gangs. Can also represent professional athletes.

*Physical +2, Social +1, Fitness +2*

**Muscle.** Strong-arm tactics are this character's weapon of choice. Without specific military training, the character gets through life with a rough and tumble approach. Bikers, thugs,

militia, or bouncers fit into this category.

*Physical +2, Social +1,  
Fitness +1, Skullduggery +1*

**Mystic Warrior.** A warrior who has supernormal abilities influencing his martial abilities. Could include paladins, mystical martial artists, or energy-sword-wielding mystics.

*Physical +2, Spiritual +1,  
Combat +1, Supernatural +1*

**Occultist.** A specialist in secrets and forgotten lore. Specific career paths for this character could be cryptozoologist, conspiracy theorist, fortune teller, or even a cult leader.

*Mental +1, Spiritual +2,  
Supernatural +2*

**Soldier.** Whether a modern infantryman, a musketeer, or an archer, the character spends their time training in the arts of warfare.

*Physical +2, Social +1,  
Combat +2*

**Tactician.** This is a military career where brains are as, if not more, important than brawn. The term includes command positions as well as special forces and other military specialists.

*Physical +1, Mental +2,  
Combat +1, Negotiation +1*

**Thief.** In this case, the term is a catch-all career for those whose jobs depend on stealth and agility. This could represent a professional art thief, a street-smart burglar, or a well-trained infiltration agent.

*Physical +1, Mental +1, Social +1,  
Skullduggery +1, Technology +1*

## Act 3:

# Attributes

*When you strip away all that a hero has learned throughout their life—the skills, the knowledge, impact their histories have had on them—what are you left with? You have the core of their character: their attributes.*

## The Attributes:

- » Physical
- » Mental
- » Social
- » Spiritual

Attributes are intended to demonstrate who the character was when they were born, and how they have developed both mentally and physically since then. Three attributes form the core of the system: Physical, Mental, and Social.

A fourth attribute will vary from one setting to another. In a fantasy setting, it might be Magic which would represent the inherent part of the character that can manipulate magic. In other settings, it might be the Fold—the ability to fold space and help propel the ships through the final frontier. Some settings may not require a fourth attribute. For the basic rules, the fourth attribute is called Spiritual.

## Physical

This is a measurement of everything related to your character's physical body. It measures raw muscular strength, agility and coordination, health, and resistance to disease and damage.

**Table A3-1: Physical Descriptions**

0	Human Sloth
2	The average human
3	Works out occasionally
4	Can lift their own body-weight
7	Olympic class athlete
10	Able to lift small trucks and contort with the best Chinese acrobats

## Mental

This is a measurement of everything related to your character's mind. This includes how smart they are, how quickly they can grasp new concepts, and their ability to adapt to new situations. It also measures their determination and will-power.

**Table A3-2: Mental Descriptions**

0	Won't be winning any Nobel prizes
2	The average human
3	Good at crosswords and brain teasers
4	Has a love of knowledge and can dig through dusty tomes for hours without noticing the passing of time
7	Should have been in MENSA
10	Can speak a dozen languages, rub their tummy, and pat their head, all while chewing gum and skipping down the sidewalk

## SOCIAL

This is a measurement of the character's ability to interact in social events. It includes how outgoing they are, how well they can handle criticism, and their ability to lie without being detected, sell snake oil, or even interact in diplomatic circles. It also measures how much resistance they have to other people's manipulations, pressure, or bullying.



**Table A3-3: Social Descriptions**

0	Gets so scared at the thought of talking to people that they stammer and walk away
2	The average human
3	The life of the party
5	A born storyteller, capable of captivating crowds
7	The perfect politician: able to talk circles around others and sell snake oil
10	The ultimate leader— their charisma is a palpable aura

## SPIRITUAL

This fourth attribute is given as a default value. It is likely to change from game world to game world. It might refer to the character's ability to cast magic, clerical or arcane. It might be a character's ability to use psionic powers. It can be whatever your system or world needs it to be.

**Table A3-4: Spiritual Descriptions**

0	Has no clue that the Truth is out there
2	The average human, may not sense or control much around them, but they do have weird things happen around them
3	Is comfortable hanging out with ghosts, though conversations may be limited
5	Can actually pull off a séance, or work the Ouija Board to find true answers
7	A potent magician - this is a true David Copperfield or Merlin
10	Able to work miracles, possibly a potent religious icon

## Option: Attribute Descriptions

Attributes provide a very broad idea of the character. They do not give any specifics about how powerful that attribute might be, or with how much finesse the character can use it. Many times, this is much broader than we would like. Enter Attribute Descriptions. These are intended to be used as a step between the Basic and Expanded Rules and should not be used when expanded attributes are present.

Attribute Descriptions are a single short phrase—no more than a handful of words in length—that tell us when the character's strength in that attribute comes into play. Basically, if you had to describe that attribute in words only (no numbers), what would you say? Perhaps your character does heavy physical labor at a factory that requires him to lift 100-lb bags all day long. You might call his Physical attribute "Strong from work." Maybe your character is very blunt, almost to the point of being abrasive. His Social attribute might be described as "Too truthful," or "Blunt and to the point."

There are two types of Attribute Descriptions, and both are encouraged: strengths and weaknesses. Strengths gain the character a +1 bonus when the Director agrees that the Description is applicable. A weakness causes a -1 penalty when the Director agrees the Description is applicable.

## Act 4:

# Skills

*No matter how strong a character might be, they cannot defeat a smaller man trained in the martial arts. No matter their intelligence, without training they will never crack the cipher in time. No matter how much natural charisma, they will suffer in politics without training. No matter the natural aptitude in magic, they are likely to change themselves into newts.*

**The Skills:**

- » Everyman
- » Combat
- » Fitness
- » Nature
- » Negotiation
- » Skullduggery
- » Supernatural
- » Technology

Where attributes describe the raw talents of the characters, it is the skills a character possesses that can make the difference between life and death.

The skills are as follows:

**Everyman.** This skill incorporates the abilities which everyone shares. It includes abilities like cooking dinner, spotting a thief in the darkness, and performing first aid.

**Combat.** Fighting is inevitable when heroes are involved. The Combat skill covers all aspects of both individual and mass combat situations. It encompasses all forms of combat, whether martial arts, swords, guns, lasers or spaceships. The individual soldier will use this skill every bit as much as the general on top of the hill, poring over maps and planning the entire invasion.

**Fitness.** Whether the situation calls for brute strength or extreme flexibility, the Fitness skill is the answer. It covers all physical and body-related activities outside of those handled by other, more specific skills. Whether you are testing your fitness by swimming the English Channel, climbing the Cliffs of Dover, or performing in the Olympics, it is covered here.

**Nature.** Surviving the worst that nature has to throw at you, whether in extreme weather or extreme animals, are

these skills. This skill covers taming wild animals, reading the signs that nature has left to track creatures or animals, knowing what to do to survive dangerous weather and terrain, and how to manipulate nature to achieve certain affects, like through herbalism.

**Negotiation.** Politicians, philosophers, and scientists might all have strong need of this skill. It helps you talk your way into or out of situations, or barter the price on something down to a reasonable level. If you need to find the answer to a difficult riddle, you can use this skill to negotiate your way through the maze of logic until you arrive at the answer. It also covers getting around the laws.

**Skullduggery.** The skills of the con artist, street magician and wily rogues are grouped here. Breaking and Entering, cracking safes, sleight of hand, and the knowledge of surviving in the rough and tumble back streets and alleys are all found in the Skullduggery Skill.

**Supernatural.** Mighty wizards, Wiccan priestesses, sharp-eyed mentalists, and brazen super-heroes all share one thing in common: they have abilities most normal people would call supernatural, paranormal, or just plain super. The Supernatural Skill is a measure of how much they know about their powers and how they work, as well as their ability to

sense other supernormals and manipulate their powers.

**Technology.** The Technology skill covers any use or creation of man-made devices. This might be hacking into the InfoNet, pushing your spaceship to its maximum abilities, or building a new bridge.

Skills have a maximum score of 10.

All characters are allowed to use a skill, even when their score in that skill is a zero.

### Option: Skill Descriptions

In the Basic Rules, skills provide a very broad idea of the character's abilities. They do not give any specifics about how good they might be with individual specialties in that skill. Many times, this is much broader than we would like, but we do not want to get into the specifics that skills would provide. Enter Skill Descriptions. These are intended to be used as a step between the Basic and Expanded Rules and should not be used when expanded skills are in use.

Skill Descriptions are a single short phrase, no more than a handful of words in length that tell us what specialty that character has in the skill. Basically, if you had to describe that skill in words only (no numbers), what would you say? Perhaps the character is a black belt in Karate, and then the Combat description might be "Martial Artist." Or maybe the character has a hard time not noticing things that happen around them, even when they wish they could tune everything out, and then they might have a General description of "Always Aware."

There are two types of Skill Descriptions, and both are encouraged: strengths

and weaknesses. Strengths gain the character a +1 bonus when the Director agrees that the Description is applicable. A weakness causes a -1 penalty when the Director agrees the Description is applicable.

## Mastery Levels

As a character gets better at a skill, their chance at success naturally raises. In the game, that means you get extra dice to roll, keeping the single highest die roll. Characters start with a skill score of zero. This Mastery level is called Novice, and the player gets 1d10 to roll for Skill Checks. Every third advancement in the skill, the Mastery level raises to the next level.

### Mastery Level Descriptions

**Novice.** This is where the character starts play. It is the everyday person trying to do everyday things.

**Apprentice.** An Apprentice has enough skills that he is capable of performing those skills better than the Novice, but can still fail miserably.

**Journeyman.** The Journeyman will reach success more often than the Apprentice and is quite a bit more successful than the Novice. His skills are becoming a natural part of him. While rare, failures are still possible.

**Master.** The Master has become one with his skills. He knows them like he was born with them, and can wield them with superb success. Only on very rare occasions will the Master fail.

Skill Mastery is expensive, as only time and practice can bring a character to the point where their skills are a natural extension of themselves. It costs 5 Advancements to raise the Skill by 1 point.

### Mastery Levels

#### Novice

- » Required Score: 0
- » Roll 1d10

#### Apprentice

- » Required Score: 3
- » Roll 2d10

#### Journeyman

- » Required Score: 6
- » Roll 3d10

#### Master

- » Required Score: 9
- » Roll 4d10

## Act 5:

# Secrets

*All perfect villains hold a secret in reserve for the day they desperately need a surprise. So does every hero. Secrets take characters beyond their normal abilities into areas that are often seemingly supernatural.*

**Secrets** were borrowed from the excellent game, *The Shadow of Yesterday*, by Clinton R. Nixon. With his permission, of course.

More secrets can be found at his website, though they will probably have to be modified slightly to work with C.O.R.E.. More information can be found at:

[www.crn games.com](http://www.crn games.com)

### The Secrets:

- » Animal Speech
- » Blessing
- » Contacts
- » Evaluate
- » Flying Leap
- » Focus Creation
- » Herbal Health
- » Hidden Pocket
- » Inner Meaning
- » Item Creation
- » Knock-back
- » Mighty Blow
- » Quality Construction
- » Signature Weapon
- » Skill Speciality
- » Sudden Knife
- » Throwing
- » Unwalked Path

Where attributes define the physical and mental properties of the character, and skills represent all of the abilities they have learned over the years, Secrets fill the gap and venture into the darker, more mysterious and wonderful aspects of the character.

## What Are Secrets?

Secrets are special abilities a character can learn that augment abilities. These are often preternatural, sometimes magical, and always better than normal. In order to use Secrets, Energy Points are spent, meaning that Secrets can be used a limited number of times before the character's Energy is restored.

Secrets can be better explained with an example:

***Secret of the Hidden Pocket** - This character is adept at hiding objects on her person. No matter how carefully searched the character has been, she may pull an inexpensive, small (hand-sized) item off her person with a successful Sleight ability check. There is no need for the player to have written this item on the character sheet previously.*

*Cost: 1 Mental Energy.*

Some Secrets will be open for all characters to take. Other Secrets are "closed"—they are only available to cer-

tain races or professions.

## Secrets Descriptions

### Secret of Animal Speech

Your character can speak to an animal and understand its signals. In order to get the animal to cooperate or not try to eat you, you might need a successful Nature skill check. Even if you fail this check, you'll understand that it wants to eat you loud and clear.

*Use Cost: 2 Mental*

*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### Secret of Blessing

With a successful Supernatural ability check, your character may bless the actions of a group. You must state a specific goal for them to accomplish. For each point of Spiritual spent, maximum of 3, you get a number of bonus dice equal to the number of Spiritual spent that any member of this group can use in accomplishing this task. This effect lasts until the Episode is over.

*Use Cost: 1-3 Spiritual*

*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### Secret of Contacts

Your character knows all sorts of people in all sorts of places. You can use this Secret for your character to automati-

cally have a past relationship with any Extra in the adventure. You may describe the relationship in a short phrase, such as “old enemy,” “wartime buddy,” “ex-lover,” but the Director gets to decide the history and current disposition of the relationship.

*Use Cost: 2 Social*  
*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### **Secret of Evaluate**

Your character’s battle experience has given her the ability to read an opponent well. Evaluate your character’s opponent not in descriptive terms, but in game mechanics, on a successful Combat ability check. You can ask for any of the following information, one bit per success level: current Physical score, current Mental score, combat skill score, or a single, specific skill score.

*Use Cost: 1 Mental.*  
*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### **Secret of Flying Leap**

Your character can make amazing leaps. Using this Secret, she can jump much further or higher than normal. For each Physical point you spend, up to three, you can jump twice the normal range. Spending 1 point would be 2x normal range, 2 points would be 3x, and 3 points would be 4x.

*Use Cost: 1-3 Physical*  
*Purchase Cost: 2 Advances*

### **Secret of Focus Creation**

Your character can create Focus items. The character must have the Secret that is being enhanced. For every 5 Spiritual points spent, the focus doubles the effect of the specified Secret. Once an item is

turned into a Focus, it cannot be changed to another Secret.

*Use Cost: 5+ Spiritual*  
*Purchase Cost: 2 Advances*

### **Secret of Herbal Health**

Your character can always find an herb that is an effective healing agent with a successful Nature skill check (Difficulty 11) in the outdoors. The herb lets you use your Nature skill to heal 1 person, fully restoring 1 Attribute. Herbs can be saved for later use.

*Use Cost: 1 Mental*  
*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### **Secret of the Hidden Pocket**

Your character is adept at hiding objects on her person. No matter how carefully searched the character has been, she may pull an inexpensive, small (hand-sized) item off her person with a successful Skullduggery skill check.

*Use Cost: 1 Mental.*  
*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### **Secret of Inner Meaning**

Your character’s art carries a meaning beyond the surface. Use any Mental- or Spiritual-based skill at a distance via a piece of your character’s art.

*Use Cost: 2 Spiritual*  
*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### **Secret of Item Creation**

Your character may create Items, either Internally Powered, or Attuned (see Equipment, below). Item creation has a base cost of 3 Spiritual. To create an Internally Powered Item, you must spend +1 Spiritual for every 10 charges (or equivalent). To create an attuned Item, you



must spend an additional +2 Spiritual. These costs can be stacked, allowing you to create an attuned item with multiple charges.

*Use Cost: 4+ Spiritual*  
*Purchase Cost: 2 Advances*

### **Secret of Knock-back**

Your character's blows send people flying. Knock back a stricken character out of normal human reach. This immediately ends the physical conflict with no resolution as to intentions.

*Use Cost: 2 Physical*  
*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### **Secret of Mighty Blow**

Your character can strike with extreme might. Spend as many points of Physical as you like to increase the harm of a successful blow in combat by +2 per point spent.

*Use Cost: Any amount of Physical*  
*Purchase Cost: 2 Advances*

### **Secret of Quality Construction**

You must specify one specific type of object (weapons, electronics, etc) when you take this Secret. Your character can craft items of excellent quality. Any item your character creates using this Secret gives one bonus die to a particular ability when using the item, permanently.

*Use Cost: 5 Mental*  
*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### **Secret of the Signature Weapon**

Your character has one weapon with which she is bonded. You gain a bonus die to any action taken with that weapon and any other character attempting to use the weapon receives a penalty die. (Note:

to change this weapon, this Secret must be taken again.)

*Use Cost: None*  
*Purchase Cost: 2 Advances*

### **Secret of Specialty (Skill)**

You must select a skill when you take this Secret. Choose a specialty your character has within that skill—for example, Tracking for the Nature skill. You always have a +3 bonus when your character attempts an action that falls within that specialty.

*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### **Secret of the Sudden Knife**

Your character is a master of the assassin's art. In a surprise attack, the victim automatically takes 3 Physical damage if your character successfully hits. This damage is in addition to any normal damage.

*Use Cost: 2 Physical,*  
*plus 1 Mental, and 1 Social.*  
*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### **Secret of Throwing**

Anything is a dangerous missile in your character's hands. She can throw anything fist-sized to greatsword-sized as an attack, and the object counts as a master quality weapon (providing a +2 bonus).

*Use Cost: 1 Physical*  
*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

### **Secret of the Unwalked Path**

Your character's footfalls leave little trace for others to follow. You can use your character's Nature skill in resistance to anyone trying to track her.

*Use Cost: 1 Mental*  
*Purchase Cost: 1 Advance*

## Act 6:

# Equipment & Wealth

*Just like the characters, the equipment they wield should play a part of the story. They should inspire role-playing, not just be another stat.*

Equipment in *C.O.R.E.* is handled a little differently than in most RPGs. There are no huge equipment lists the player is forced to browse through for an hour writing down each individual item the character has, calculating cost and weight. Instead, equipment is very flexible. Since the damage done with most items is the same, the player writes down primarily the special items they have. They can also write down anything that is necessary to make their character's concept come to life.

*Peter the Knight might have just his dappled-grey stallion, the horse's insect-like iron armor, his father's sword, his shield with the Raven's crest painted on it, and his plate mail with rows of sharp iron studs. They are listed on his character sheet because they help define the image of the character. Notice that it is not just listed as "a sword" but "his father's sword." This implies a history, and sentimentality to the character.*

## Equipment Types

Equipment is categorized into a few different types to differentiate between their usage and abilities, and the type of resources they are required to use.

## Equipment

These are mundane devices that characters use to perform certain actions, from swords to super-computers. Some items may be required to perform certain actions (like an electron microscope to examining the molecular structure of an alien substance) or simply provide some situational bonus (using a sword against an unarmed opponent). They do not require any resources to be used.

## Focus

This is a device through which a Secret is employed (the awe ability of King Arthur when holding Excalibur, for example.) The power of a Focus lies in its ability to amplify a character's Secret. Some Secrets may not function unless the character has a specific Focus.

Focus items provide a +3 bonus to using the specified Secret.

## Item

A device with a self-contained Secret. The methods for "powering" the item's Secrets could be one of the following options:

**Internal power supply.** The Item has its own pool of resources that are used to activate its powers. This could be

charges, uses, or ammo. It is part of the Item and stays with the item. Anybody using the Item has access to this pool of resources and can therefore use the Secrets of the item. If the item is stolen, taken, or given to another it will be fully functional for that, or any, individual.

**Attunement.** the character wishing to use the item must pay some resource in order to attune it to them. Attunement could be learning the word or phrase to activate the ring, for example. Thereafter they may use the Secrets contained within the Item (possibly by spending their own resources instead of some of the internal power supply). Attunement may be limited to one user or may be open to any number of users. If limited to one user it can not be used by another character, unless it is attuned to the new character, in which case the previous owner loses their Attunement with the Item and must Attune with it again to use it. If open to

other users (or other type or class of user, i.e. ‘pure of heart’) then it will function as mentioned for any character fitting the proper description.

## Equipment Quality

Poor quality equipment imposes a -2 penalty to all rolls involving that equipment. Normal quality does not have any bonuses or penalties. Master quality equipment provides a +2 bonus to all rolls using it.

## Wealth

It is not necessary to keep track of every gold coin, gem, or dollar in your bank. Instead, a character simply has a wealth rating from 0 to 5. When rolling on a conflict that your wealth may have some influence over, you add your wealth rating to the roll.



## Act 7:

# Conflicts

*A roleplaying session without conflict of various kinds is just plain boring. If the characters can't get into a good argument or fight, or pull a fast one of the local curmudgeon, something is lacking. Just like reading a story, part of the excitement in RPGs comes from living through dangers and triumphs that we will never see in real life. It might be racing through the streets, chasing the burglar on your Harley; finding our way through the maze of Roman politics; or even defeating the evil Overlord through cunning, guts, and luck.*

Conflicts should be run fast and furious, so the flow of the game is not interrupted any more than it should be. To make this happen, the conflicts are divided into three different types so you only have to deal with the amount of detail needed for that conflict. Characters are encouraged by the rules to be both descriptive and daring, adding to everyone's fun.

Put simply, conflicts happen whenever one person wants something and someone else opposes them. A conflict can be a fight, a verbal argument, trying to squeeze the proper amount of venom out of snake's fang for a potion, or trying to wrest your opponent's control of magic away from them. Conflicts can be associated with each of the four Attributes. They each form a different type of conflict, but all of them are resolved in the same way.

## Conflict Scope

Every group has different elements of the game they like to focus on. Some groups like to get deep in the specifics of every combat, while other groups might like to detail only the conflicts that are most crucial to the story-line, speeding through other, less important conflicts in

a single roll. *C.O.R.E.* handles this with ease. Following, you'll find our recommendations for how to handle conflicts, and how much detail to go into. Remember, though, that the reason we roleplay is to have fun, and each group should feel free to find the level of detail they prefer.

## Inconsequential Conflicts

Inconsequential conflicts are all of the smaller conflicts that do not have any direct impact on the overall story. These could be haggling over the price of a horse, or mowing through the vast battalion of orcs that stand between you and your true enemy. These conflicts are handled with a single roll for the overall conflict. They often do not present much in the way of danger to the characters.

## Important Conflicts

Important Conflicts are those that have a small impact on how the story progresses, but not so crucial that the story would end if this conflict was lost. These types of conflict should definitely hold the possibility of danger and death, but don't necessarily need every little blow to be detailed. In the case of multiple opponents, you might separate each opponent into their own, individual conflict.

## Crucial Conflicts

These are conflicts that are vital to the story. The chance of death, if a physical conflict, is very real. The iconic example of this is when the heroes finally reach the primary villain. Every strategy the players and villain can use to put their opponent off-balance should be another conflict. Every blow might be detailed, depending on the group.

## Energy Points

Energy Points represent the character's physical, mental, social, and spiritual (or magical, etc.) energy. Whether we are physically exhausted, hurt, or simply mentally drained from hours of magical research, our current ability to perform is hampered in nearly everything that we do. All of these forms of exhaustion and pain are abstracted into Energy Pools.

Each Attribute is a separate energy pool. So, each character has separate Physical, Mental, Social and Spiritual energy pools.

By default, each conflict results in a temporary loss of 1 point of that Attribute. There are rules, like *Giving It All You've Got* (see below), that allow a character to perform additional damage.

## Recovering Energy Points

Attributes can be replenished in several ways. Special situations may arise where your Director would award you Attribute Points as a bonus for success.

**Rest.** Eight hours of sleep will fully refresh all Attributes.

**Healing Scenes.** In order to recover Attribute points between scenes, our

character must make a Healing Scene. This is a simple narrative that the player makes showing how their character got their confidence or energy back. This will fully refresh one Attribute. Only one Attribute can be healed between a scene. To recover other Attributes, you must either rest for 8 hours or heal a different Attribute after each scene.

## Death And Dying

Dying does not happen randomly in *C.O.R.E.* Instead, it will be the result of a failed conflict where the players and the Director agreed upon the terms. This allows the players to choose to make their deaths matter. It might be a sacrifice to save their party, or it might be the result of a specific spiritual ritual or quest that ends in the character's transcendence.

## Story Points

At the beginning of every game session, each character receives one Story Point (SP). Story Points allow the character to make 1 automatic success at the time of their choosing. They can not be saved from session to session. The most a character may ever have is one.

## Frames of Time

While the system is designed to be flexible, frequently a reference is needed to how long a conflict lasts, or a spell effect lasts. To handle this, we use the following terms for defining time.

**Series.** The overarching story for the game, synonymous with a campaign in other systems, made up of one or more Stories.

**Story.** A self contained adventure with a beginning, middle and end. It may take several Episodes to complete.

**Episode.** A single playing session.

**Scene.** A series of character Actions that all take place in the same location.

**Action.** A variable length of time that allows a character to perform some task.

## Who goes first?

Some groups may not need, or desire, a set method to determine who goes first. Many people, however, have been raised on *Dungeons & Dragons*™ or other systems that have taken the idea of Initiative from it. For those that are most comfortable with a turn order in place, we've got two options for your group to choose from.

### Turn Order: Option #1

This method works best when the Turn Order is being determined between two people, or two groups. It is handled as any other Opposed Conflict. Depending upon the situation, it might use opposed Physical Finesse + Brawl (or one of the other combat options.)

### Turn Order: Option #2

Option #2 is ideal for use during Important and Crucial Conflicts, where every action matters. The turn order is determined by the character with the highest sum of Physical Finesse + Mental Finesse. This accounts for how quickly someone can spot what is happening and physically react to it.

## Handling Conflict

### Stating Your Intent

When a conflict has reared its ugly head, the first step is for the player to tell the Director what they're trying to accomplish and how they are trying to do that. They should make sure to tell what motivations are behind it. It is two very different tasks to dance with the Princess with the intent of impressing her father with your etiquette, or dancing with the intent to seduce her. Both situations would require a different set of Skills and Attributes to be used.

Skills are not tied directly to a specific Attribute. A situation often will be able to be solved using several different approaches, and the Director, paying attention to the player's description of how they want to accomplish the task, will have the flexibility to choose the best one, or to modify the player's choice.

### Success And Failure Terms

Once the player has stated their intent, the Director states the results for both success and failure. Directors are encouraged to make failure more than "No, you don't succeed." Instead, the failure result should set the player up for more difficulties.

### Bartering the terms

Often, what the Director states for success or failure is not what the players had in mind. In this case, they have one chance to barter for different results. After hearing that they will do only 1 point of Physical damage to their opponent, the player might want to try going for a more difficult shot for more damage. Of course,

### Initiative

In most conflicts, any form of initiative, or turn order, won't be necessary. Crucial conflicts, though, are a great opportunity for turn order.

### Conflict Resolution:

- » State Your Intent
- » Negotiate Success & Failure terms
- » Roll

with more damage comes a larger penalty for failure. The player is encouraged to be creative with their suggested terms for failure. A good penalty for failure is often one that will provide more roleplaying opportunities in the future, like a scar that marks him permanently. When trying for more damage, the player can not reduce the cost of failure, but might be able to change the way the failure affects them. As always, the Director has the final approval for the success and failure terms.

## The Roll

Once the terms have been set, the player makes a Skill Check against the assigned Difficulty to determine their success. Skill checks are resolved by rolling a number of d10s appropriate to their Skill's Mastery Level (1d10, 2d10, etc) and adding the value of the Skill and the relevant Attribute, plus any other bonuses that may be appropriate, such as for higher-quality tools or materials being used.

*Lt. Johnson needs to get his men across the small chasm that blocks their path to safety. He sees two options available to him. He can either use his Technology skill combined with Mental to design and build a bridge with cut branches and vines, or use Technology + Physical to find the right tree to topple, while understanding where he needs to break it to have it fall in the correct place and not fall into the chasm. Since the enemy is closing in hard on their position, he decides that toppling the tree is the only realistic option.*

*His Physical score is a 3, and his Technology Skill is a 4 (Apprentice.) So he rolls 2d10 + 3 + 4. (2d10 because of his Apprentice Mastery level, 3 for Physical and 4 for Knowledge.) He rolls the dice and gets a 5 and an 8. He keeps the single highest result (8), adds his skill and*

*Attribute values and has a total of 15. If he had not had any Mastery Levels in Knowledge, he would have rolled 1d10, gotten the five, and had a result of 12 (5 + 3 + 4.)*

This resulting number is compared to the Difficulty Number the Director has assigned the task. If it equals or is greater than the Difficulty Number, the skill check is a success. If it is lower than the assigned Difficulty, the roll is a failure.

If the highest value on the dice is a one (1), then the Director is encouraged to find something bad that might happen because of the roll. It might not happen until the next round, or it might not become apparent until farther in the future.

*Lt. Johnson successfully makes the tree-bridge, but rolled a one (1) on both of his dice. While the result is successful, the Director might decide that he did not judge the sturdiness of the tree as well as he should have. The tree has a hairline crack in the center of it now, resulting from the impact of the landing, and will collapse if enough weight is put on it. The Director secretly rolls 1d10 and gets a 6. He decides that when the sixth man is crossing, the tree snaps.*

## Determining Difficulty Numbers

There are two methods for determining the difficulty of an action, depending on if it is a direct conflict with another creature, or another type of conflict.

If the conflict is directly with another creature, the difficulty is determined by adding the opponent's relevant Attribute + relevant Skill + 5.

*An unarmed person attacks an unarmed Kobold. The Kobold has Physical 1 and Combat 2, so the Diff is 1 + 2 + 5 = 8. Most people should have about even odds.*

*On the other hand, an unarmed person attacking an unarmed Dragon. The Dragon has Physical 18 and Combat 12, so the Diff is  $18 + 12 + 5 = 35$ . The person has a big problem.*

When the conflict is not directly with another person, we must use a different method. These conflicts add an amount of difficulty based upon the amount of story change.

- Minor: +1
- Significant: +5
- Major: +10
- Critical: +15

This number is added to 10 to determine the final difficulty.

The players may choose to lower the difficulty by accepting a larger amount of damage. The difficulty is modified by -2 for each point of damage.

*The Kestrals Crew are locked in the brig after an almost omnipotent alien called "P" takes over...*

*One of the crew decides to break out. This is a Significant Story change, which adds +5 to the difficulty. The Director offers a minor story change for failure (the Alien notices and trusts them less), which drops the Difficulty by 1 to 14. Wanting to drop it farther, the Player suggests that on a failure his character also loses one energy (another drop of 2 to a total of 12.)*

## Taking Damage

When a character fails a conflict, his penalty often will be to take some damage. By default, the amount of damage done is 1 point. This damage is taken from the Attribute that represents the type of conflict they lost. If they were in a fight, the damage would be taken from their Physical Attribute. If it was a great debate in the Roman Senate, it would be Social damage.

There are no direct penalties associated with reaching zero (0) in any of the Attributes. Instead, they no longer have any bonuses to their die rolls. However, should a character reach 0 points in an Attribute and take more damage, they are considered incapacitated.

A Physical incapacitation results in the character being unable to move. They may have fainted, or fallen unconscious—the results are up to the Director and the stakes of the conflict.

For a Mental incapacitation, the character is considered dazed and is unable to perform any actions until they can heal their Mental Attribute.

A Social incapacitation results in lots of stammering, the inability to say what you mean to say, or the complete loss of any social grace. Suddenly, everything you do seems to come out wrong.

## Optional Rules: Boosting your chances

Since the goal of the game is to partake in heroic, cinematic adventures, we have provided a few ways to increase your chances.

### Giving It All You've Got

Sometimes we just need to push ourselves a little past the bounds of our comfort zone. We need to put more of ourselves into the conflict if we're going to have any chance to win. Before they have made their roll, the player has the option of expending extra energy from their Attribute to hedge the bet and help ensure a win. For every



Attribute Point the player spends, they get a +1 bonus to the result. The Attribute Point must be from the same Attribute that the roll is being made against. If they roll a success, they keep the Attribute Points. If they fail, the Attribute Points are lost, just like the player took wounds from the conflict. This is in addition to any Wounds the player receives directly from the combat.

When Giving It All You've Got, the player must state before the roll that they intend to do this.

*Lee Goldensmile is racing across the rooftops of 1800s New York. Close on his heels are Hell Hounds sent after him by the voodoo queen, Shaliira. Ahead of him is a gap between buildings that he is afraid he cannot make. He runs harder, boosting his speed, and throws his entire body into the jump. He knows that failure on this roll is death, so he gives it all he's got.*

*The roll is Physical (5) + Fitness (4 - Apprentice). The Director states this is difficulty of 15. Lee opts to risk 3 Physical in this task. He rolls 2d10 because of his Apprentice Mastery Level in Fitness, and gets a 4 and a 7. He keeps the highest roll (7) and adds his Physical and the extra Physical points and gets a total of 15 (7+5+3): exactly what he needed. He sails over the roof and lands firmly on the edge of the building. Rock crumbles under his feet, but he's alive.*

*If Lee had failed, he would have smashed into the side of the building, falling into the fire escape, where he would be given more chances. However, he would have lost the Physical points, having an effective Physical score of only 1 until he could restore them.*

If the conflict results in damage to a character, that damage is only 1 point. However, when using the Giving It All

You've Got rule, the number of damage dealt equals 1 + the number of extra energy put into the blow.

*Lee reaches a dead end. He is forced to turn and confront the Hell Hound. From legend, he knows the dogs have a vicious attack, but are not overly hardy. If he can just get in one or two good blows, he can survive the attack. His Physical (5) and Combat (4) give him a decent chance of hitting, but he wants to put extra power into each blow so that he can finish the creature off as fast as possible. He opts to risk an extra 3 points of Physical. He would like to risk more, but he knows he needs to save some energy for the second shot.*

*On the first strike, he rolls an 8, giving a total of 17 (8 + Physical 5 + Combat 4). The Difficulty was only 12, so it's a success. Instead of doing just 1 point of damage, he deals 4 points of damage (1 + the number of extra Physical points that he risked.)*

## The Barstool And The Chandelier

Combat in stories is filled with exciting battles as martial artists evade opponents with acrobatics among the pipes, and with swashbucklers swinging from chandeliers. Cowboys slide across the bar, cups shattering as they are shoved out of the way. To help players enter the thrill of these situations, they are rewarded for creative use of their surroundings.

When the player gives a creative use of their surroundings, or take a risk in a fun and dramatic way that enhances the game for everyone, the Director may lower the Difficulty Number by 3 points. This provides a gentle encouragement to players to have fun and take part in the game, which makes it a richer experience for everyone. Since the difficulties

are lowered, the failure results must be steeper. In addition to the stated failure result, the Director should provide another failure result directly related to their use of the environment.

*Crash Montana is a secret agent whose cover has just been blown. He's trapped in the missile silo's control room with no weapons, and three goons to get through before he can make his escape. All three goons charge him at once. He quickly surveys his surroundings and takes action. He jumps onto a chair, his momentum rolling him into Goon #1. Just before impact, he jumps up and grabs onto the pipes that line the ceiling. Swinging his legs up onto the ceiling, he shoves off, breaking the pipe and showering Goon #2 with hot steam. He flips off and lands hard on the control booth, making sparks fly into the face of Goon #3, who backs up, shielding his face, giving Crash the space he needs to dart through and escape.*

*The Director decides that each of the three conflicts used the environment to create a wonderfully dramatic experience, and reduces the difficulty of each conflict by 3.*

## A Helping Hand

When a situation allows for it, multiple characters can assist in creating a successful conflict. This may be everyone

helping to pull on the rope and topple the ancient statue, or everyone searching through the library for one particular manuscript, when only one player is able to describe the tome needed.

While other characters are lending a helping hand, they add their appropriate Skill score to the results. The primary characters make the roll as usual, but the total of all of the helpers' scores are added to his results.

*In order to enter the Temple of Aski-rae, the intrepid explorers must pull down a huge statue that sits in front of the only remaining door. Dolph, the strongest in the party, secures the rope and makes the roll. He rolls 3d10 for his Fitness (7), getting a 4, 9, and 3, and adds his Physical (8) and Fitness scores. His total is 24. The other four party members grab on to the rope behind him and pull. They know they will need every ounce of strength they have, so they all choose to Give It All They've Got. They have Fitness scores of 5, 3, 6, and 7, for a total of 21. The group's total result is 45. However, the Director had stated they need a score of 50 to succeed, so they each give it all they've got, adding 2 Physical each to the total. The roll comes out the same and they now have a total of 55 (45+10). The statue comes tumbling down and, once the dust settles, the party can enter through the dark maw of the Temple.*

## Act 8:

# Director's Notes

*The Director has one of the hardest jobs of running a game. They must create the world, play all of the Extras, and keep the Actors interested and excited throughout. While C.O.R.E. has been designed to make these things as simple as possible, a few items still need a little more explanation.*

### Need More Help?

Keep checking the forums at [www.DragonsLanding.com](http://www.DragonsLanding.com) for more information and advice for Director's and players.

Also, the months following the release will surely bring more Special Brews dedicated to C.O.R.E., so be sure to subscribe to the podcast for your best hour in gaming.

## Character Growth

As the game stretches into multiple scenes and episodes, the characters can—and should—grow into different heroes with new skills, powers, and an ever-evolving sense of confidence. To do this, they need some way to measure and balance their growth within the framework of the game.

Directors are encouraged to award 1-5 CGP for excellent role-playing—especially when the roleplaying situation might hurt the character—or for fantastic ideas and solutions during the game. These bonuses are generally handed out as they occur, since this encourages more role-playing from everyone involved.

## Story Growth

Each story typically has a big picture which is going to take great effort and heroism on the part of the Actors. This is probably not the end of the Actors' lives, however, and is just the beginning of a new story. When the Actors have come to the completion of the story, they should be rewarded in a big way.

**Character Growth Awards:** While the number may vary from story to story, based upon the power-level of your game, and how fast you want characters to advance, a rough guideline would be 20 CGP for each Actor. (And if any villains survived, be sure to give them a similar award.)

**Story Awards:** Another type of reward that should be included at this point in the game is to reward the actors with non-CGP items. This might be the deed for a new starship or tract of land, or membership in a very secretive organization. Use your imagination; just be sure to pay attention to each Actor's motivations, and the motivations of the group as a whole.

## Episode Growth

In order to allow characters to grow throughout the game, they need more than just Story rewards. At the end of each Episode, reward the characters. This award can vary depending on how fast you want your characters to grow in power and skill, and how long each Episode is. A base range of between 2-5 CGP is recommended.



## Working With Encounter Blocks

Encounter Blocks are the recommended way to handle all Inconsequential conflicts within the Story. Important and Crucial conflicts are handled slightly differently, and will be explained after we discuss how Encounter Blocks work.

### What is the Encounter Block?

The Encounter block is a shorthand way to describe the difficulty of the conflict. Here is an example, taken from the Quick Start Narrative at the beginning of the rules.

#### **Chase! Duration 3, Severity 1, Difficulty 12 (Traffic Maneuvers 16)**

Let's break this down into the individual pieces and describe how each one is determined.

**The Title.** The title provides a very brief description of the scene. It makes it easy to remember what is going on, or to refer to the proper scene in your notes.

**Duration.** This shows how long the scene is intended to last. The number shown—in this case 3—is the expected number of conflicts within the scene. This is not a hard and fast rule, but a suggestion.

**Severity.** This is the amount of damage that an Actor would take for failing a roll during the conflict. If the conflict would logically result in some form damage—whether physical, mental, social, or spiritual—then the severity should be listed here. The majority of conflicts should have a Severity of 1. There may be times when something would be especially devastating, though, such as a bomb going off in the Actor's immediate area. At such times, it might warrant a Severity of 2 or 3. One rule of thumb to keep in mind, though, is the longer the Duration, the lower the Severity. Take the bomb example. If the Duration is only 1, we might justify a damage of 3. However, if the Duration is 3, we don't necessarily want to create a Severity of 3. What would happen if they Actor's failed at all 3 conflicts? That would be 9 points of damage and, if they are all affecting the same attribute, it would surely put our characters unconscious. For Inconsequential conflicts, this is not what we want.

When a conflict has a Severity of 0, it tells us that failure does not result in any attribute damage. Instead, it creates new story problems. Just because a Severity is non-zero, though, does not mean there won't be story problems that crop up, but a Severity of 0 tells us this is all that can happen within that conflict.

**Difficulty.** The base difficulty for the conflict should be derived using the same methods described earlier in the rules. In conflicts where there will be multiple people—say having to pass a number of guards to get into the warehouse—you should use the average abilities when determining difficulty.

If there is one (or more) special situations that you anticipate cropping up within the conflict, you might give additional, more specific, difficulties. Using our example above, that would be Traffic Maneuvers difficulty listed. This tells us that, for the ma-

jority of conflicts within this scene the difficulty will be 9 (the first number listed) but any special maneuvers within traffic would be done at a difficulty of 12.

Often, when determining difficulties, you will have to use your judgment and modify the value up or down by a point or two. Do not go too far with this, though, or you run the risk of making encounters too easy or too difficult. Remember, the players have a number of options at their disposal for reducing the difficulty of the conflict.

## Important Conflicts

Important conflicts differ from Inconsequential conflicts in that we want to force our characters to go through a number of different stages before the conflict can be called a success. This might be having to get past multiple guards or through multiple traps in a single tunnel.

The way we show these is to list each conflict below the title, in the order we expect them to be encountered. Like this:

### **Trapped Tunnel - Duration 3**

**Sliding Stone - Severity 1 Difficulty 15**

**Russian Soldier - Severity 1 Difficulty 17 (Bribe 13)**

**Spiked Pit - Severity 1 Difficulty 15**

In this example, we expect the Actors to be forced to go through all 3 conflicts. If the players do not make it through this encounter, it would require a major amount of story change—perhaps they must take an alternate route that keeps them away from their goal, or presents new story goals. This would normally have a difficulty of 20. Since there are 3 encounters, though, we have lowered the difficulty, giving the characters a slightly better chance to get through. In the case of the soldier, note the bribe difficulty listed. If the players do not immediately try to shoot him down, they could talk with him and bribe him. On a success, they might be shown a safer, more direct route. On a failure, the soldier might radio in their location, unless shot down first. If he shows them a safer route, we would not need to do the last conflict.

## Crucial Conflicts

Crucial conflicts are a completely different beast. During Crucial conflicts, we are telling the characters that this conflict—be it the final battle with the master villain, or a showdown of wits on a game show—will be done where every roll is a direct roll against the opponent. The conflict will not be resolved until the Director has decided that the opponent is well and truly defeated, meaning that their stats do not allow them any more options and the logical result of an Actor's success is for defeat of the character.

The recommended way to show this is simply to list the title of the encounter, and then give a listing of the villain's stats in the conflict's description.

## Challenge Ratings

Every character or creature in *C.O.R.E.* has a Challenge Rating (CR). The CR is a quick way to describe to the Director how much of a challenge the character is for your party. While this does not see any use in the basic rules, it provides a measure for Directors to use to gauge the difficulty of their encounters. In future supplements, this number will be used for each character and creature listed.

A CR is calculated by adding the total number of points it would take to build that character. For example, consider a character with the following stats:

Physical: 8

Mental: 6

Social: 5

Spiritual: 3

**Total Attribute scores: 22**

Everyman: 5

Combat: 5

Fitness: 4

Nature: 6

Negotiation: 3

Skullduggery: 0

Supernatural: 2

Technology: 3

**Total Skill points: 28**

**Total Secrets: 2**

So, to find the CR of this character, we add the total number of Attributes, Skill points, and Secrets and find a CR of 52.

To increase the usability of the CR, we also add a prefix that tells what type of conflict the character is most suited to. The possible prefixes are:

- P – Physical
- M – Mental
- So – Social
- Sp – Spiritual

This character is geared most heavily towards physical and combat, so its CR would be P52.



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